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ABSTRACT

Procedures used by 55 faculty in the evaluation of students in various academic areas in Indiana University were studied. The majority of respondents taught undergraduates, were male, and were experienced, full-time faculty. Business faculty used primarily essay tests and research papers, while physical science faculty used mostly objective tests, homework assignments, and research papers. In all of the other academic areas, a wide variety of products were considered when compiling grades. Fine arts faculty employed the widest variety of student products. Findings suggested the following: instructors felt that they adequately communicated the course objectives and the grading method to students; objective rather than subjective evaluation was preferred most by business and physical science faculty and least by humanities and fine arts faculty; faculty felt that the same products and standards should be used for all students in the class, while some faculty altered these requirements to accommodate minority and foreign students; and the more data-oriented disciplines preferred objective procedures. The grading questionnaire is appended. (SW)

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Testing and Grading Faculty Practices and Opinions

INDIANA STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Number Fifty-One

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Bureau of Evaluative Studies and Testing
INDIANA UNIVERSITY APRIL 1984

AE018

TESTING AND GRADING: FACULTY PRACTICES AND OPINIONS

Clinton I. Chase
Linda M. Wakefield

INDIANA STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

NUMBER FIFTY-ONE

A Monograph of the

BUREAU OF EVALUATIVE STUDIES AND TESTING

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

April 1984

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INTRODUCTION

Designing student projects and tests through which student achievement is assessed has largely been a matter of individual instructor choice. But few faculty have ever had specific instruction to help them design appropriately reliable and valid evaluation methods. Also, few departments attempt to devise common procedures across similar classes. In fact, some faculty will argue that to do so would be an incursion on their academic freedom to manage instruction as they choose. Clearly, classroom applications of assessment procedures are often regarded by faculty as specifically adapted to their instructional plan and uniquely designed to fit that plan.

But what are the beliefs and practices of faculty in the assessment area? The purpose of this study was to discover how faculty feel about certain grading and evaluation procedures, and to determine which types of evaluation products (tests, papers, etc.) are being used in various schools and departments of the University.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

In the spring of 1983, 90 questionnaires* were sent to a sample of Indiana University faculty randomly drawn from the list of the current semesters' instructors. Fifty-five usable questionnaires were returned for a return rate of 61 percent. This is an acceptable return considering the survey was anonymous and no direct follow-up appeal to nonrespondents could be made.

Of the 55 responses, 49 percent were undergraduate instructors, 20 percent graduate instructors, and 31 percent taught both undergraduate and graduate courses. The sample was 75 percent male, 22 percent female, with 3 percent not reporting sex. None of the respondents were first year instructors; 15 percent had taught 2-5 years, and 84 percent had been teaching over 5 years. The vast majority, 89 percent, were full-time faculty, 7 percent were part-time, and 2 percent had other arrangements - perhaps a primary administrative responsibility while also teaching a class. Some 26 percent of the respondents taught more than one section of the same course, while 35 percent reported sharing multi-section responsibilities with associate instructors.

*See Appendix for a copy of the survey questionnaire and accompanying letter.

Table 1 lists academic areas and the number of faculty who reported their primary teaching responsibility in each.

Table I. Academic areas and the number of respondents who reported primary teaching responsibility in each.

Area	Number
Business	7
Fine Arts	5
Humanities	17
Physical Sciences	11
Social Sciences	8
Education*	2
HPER*	3
SPEA*	2

*The last three areas contained less than five respondents each so these were combined into a single category "other" for further analysis.

In summary, the majority of respondents dealt with undergraduate instruction, were male, experienced instructors, and were full-time faculty. This appears to be a sample whose views of classroom assessment may well reflect a broad spectrum of faculty opinion on this topic.

RESULTS

The use of various evaluation products by faculty is reported in Table 2. Each of these items were checked on a five-point scale, where "don't use" was awarded a value of 1, "use completely" 5. The three mid-range categories were combined in Table 2. Percentages as well as means are shown.

The most used evaluation product was the objective test. Overall, this type of test was used somewhat or completely by 80 percent of the instructors in this survey. Objective tests were used mostly by instructors in the Physical Sciences and Fine Arts. In fact, 20 percent of the Fine Arts instructors said that they relied completely upon objective test results in compiling grades. However, the small sample of the faculty in this area makes this finding speculative.

Table 2. Faculty Use of Various Evaluation Products

Product	Business N=7	Fine Arts N=5	Humanities N=17	Phys.Sci. N=11	Soc.Sci. N=8	Other N=8	Total N=55
OBJECTIVE TESTS							
% Don't use (category 1)	42.9	-0-	17.6	9.1	37.5	14.3	20.0
% Use some (categories 2,3 & 4)	57.2	80.0	76.5	63.7	62.5	85.8	70.9
% Use completely (category 5)	-0-	20.0	5.9	27.3	-0-	-0-	9.1
Mean score (Don't use=1, Use completely=5)	2.3	3.6	3.1	3.8	2.5	3.1	3.1
ESSAY TESTS							
% Don't use	28.2	20.0	23.5	72.7	12.5	14.3	30.9
% Use some	71.1	80.0	76.5	27.3	62.5	85.8	65.4
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	25.0	-0-	3.6
Mean score	2.9	2.4	2.8	1.5	3.4	3.0	2.6*
RESEARCH PAPERS							
% Don't use	28.6	40.0	47.1	36.4	25.0	42.9	38.2
% Use some	71.1	60.0	53.0	63.7	62.5	57.2	60.1
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	12.5	-0-	1.7
Mean score	2.9	1.8	2.5	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.6
OTHER PAPERS							
% Don't use	42.9	-0-	29.4	63.6	50.0	42.9	40.0
% Use some	57.2	100.0	70.6	36.4	50.0	57.2	60.0
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Mean score	2.4	3.0	2.8	1.7	2.3	2.3	2.4
LAB REPORTS							
% Don't use	100.0	100.0	88.2	63.6	75.0	57.1	80.0
% Use some	-0-	-0-	11.8	36.4	25.0	42.9	20.0	
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Mean score	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.8	1.5	1.8	1.4
LAB PERFORMANCE							
% Don't use	100.0	80.0	82.4	100.0	100.0	71.4	81.8
% Use some	-0-	20.0	17.7	-0-	-0-	28.6	18.2
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Mean score	1.0	1.6	1.4	1.8	1.0	1.6	1.4
ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE							
% Don't use	100.0	40.0	94.1	100.0	100.0	100.0	92.7
% Use some	-0-	60.0	5.9	-0-	-0-	-0-	7.3
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Mean score	1.0	2.8	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.2*
						*ANOVA is beyond .01	
ORAL REPORTS							
% Don't use	42.9	20.0	35.3	72.7	62.5	42.9	47.3
% Use some	57.1	80.0	64.7	27.3	37.5	57.2	52.6
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Mean score	2.1	2.6	2.5	1.5	1.8	1.7	2.1
IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION							
% Don't use	42.9	20.0	5.9	45.5	62.5	28.5	30.9
% Use some	57.2	80.0	94.1	54.6	37.5	71.5	69.1
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Mean score	2.3	3.0	3.0	1.8	1.8	2.1	2.5*
						*ANOVA beyond .01	
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS							
% Don't use	57.1	-0-	35.3	27.3	75.0	28.6	38.2
% Use some	42.9	100.0	64.6	63.7	25.0	71.5	60.1
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	9.1	-0-	-0-	1.8
Mean score	1.9	1.9	2.4	2.9	1.5	2.0	2.3
ATTITUDE							
% Don't use	85.6	20.0	76.5	81.8	87.5	71.4	74.5
% Use some	14.3	80.0	23.6	18.2	12.5	28.6	25.4
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0
Mean score	1.1	2.6	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.4*
						*ANOVA beyond .01	
COMPUTER PRINTOUTS							
% Don't use	71.4	100.0	94.1	81.8	75.0	85.7	85.5
% Use some	28.6	-0-	5.9	18.2	25.0	14.3	14.6
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Mean score	1.4	1.0	1.1	1.4	1.6	1.1	1.2
IMPROVEMENT							
% Don't use	42.9	20.0	29.4	45.5	50.0	57.1	40.0
% Use some	57.2	80.0	70.6	54.6	50.0	42.9	60.0
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Mean score	1.7	3.0	2.2	1.7	2.0	1.6	2.0
ATTENDANCE							
% Don't use	85.7	20.0	41.2	72.7	62.5	57.1	56.4
% Use some	14.3	80.0	58.7	27.3	37.5	42.9	43.7
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Mean score	1.7	3.2	2.1	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.8*
						*ANOVA beyond .01	
EFFORT							
% Don't use	85.7	20.0	52.9	54.5	75.0	71.4	60.0
% Use some	14.3	80.0	47.1	45.5	25.0	28.6	40.0
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Mean score	1.0	3.2	1.9	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.8*
						*ANOVA sig. at .0321	
ANY OTHER PRODUCT							
% Don't use	100.0	100.0	88.2	100.0	100.0	85.7	94.5
% Use some	-0-	-0-	11.8	-0-	-0-	14.3	5.4
% Use completely	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Mean score	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.1
			"Oral Tests" "Depends on Course"			"Development Product"	

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Essay examinations were used some in every academic area. Social Sciences were the greatest single users. Here a quarter of the faculty used essays exclusively and another two-thirds used them some. Essay tests were also frequently cited among "other" (Educ., HPER, SPEA) and Business faculty.

Interestingly, in-class participation was a fairly commonly cited part of assessment. Fine Arts and Humanities reported its use most often, although some in every academic area used it too. Further research might well be aimed at how these instructors objectify the assessment of participation since so many social and personality factors would appear to be involved.

A significant portion of faculty also use "improvement," "attendance," "attitude," and "effort" as part of their grading scheme. These features appear most notably among the Fine Arts respondents, but also were cited by faculty of all other areas. How are these variables assessed, recorded, weighted? What is their relevance to instructional objectives? How will a professor who marks down a student defend him/herself when a student says, "But my participation in class is above average!" Where are the data that can be brought to bear to substantiate a professor's action?

Across all faculty the top most-used classroom assessment procedures as shown by the mean of the "don't use" to "use completely" scale, were: 1) objective tests, 2) essay tests and research papers (tied), 3) in-class participation, 4) other papers, and 5) homework assignments. These items represent a considerable burden of reading and judgment on the part of the faculty.

Because of sample size some caution must be exercised in examining the data for each academic area separately. However, a perusal of the data by area leads to the following tentative generalization based upon the responses of the sample.

1. The Business faculty tend to use essay tests most often, followed by research papers, and objective tests in establishing a basis for grades.

2. The Fine Arts instructors consider a wide variety of products for grading purposes. Among the most-used assessment procedures in Fine Arts, in order, are: objective tests, attendance and effort, improvement and in-class participation, and artistic performance.

3. The Humanities instructors primarily employed objective tests, in-class participation, essay tests, and papers other than research papers, and oral reports.

4. The Physical Science faculty relied primarily upon objective tests, but also used research papers and homework assignments.

5. The Social Science faculty based grades primarily upon essay tests, but also used objective tests, research papers, and other papers.

6. "Other" faculty (Educ., HPER, SPEA) based their grades first upon objective tests, then essay tests, research papers, and other papers.

It appears that the type of assessment procedure used depends heavily on the discipline in which the instructor works.

In addition to an examination of the various evaluation products used by faculty, this study also looked at the faculty's opinions about various evaluation issues and practices. Data from these analyses are reported in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Table 3 shows for each of the six academic areas and for the total sample the percentages of selection and means for items 1 through 16 on the questionnaire. The vast majority of instructors agreed that students understand the objectives of the course (92 percent) and that they understand the grading procedures being used (96 percent). In a 1974 study of faculty and student opinions about grading,* similar questions yielded the following data: 33 percent of faculty felt students understood the objectives while 28 percent of students agreed; 83 percent of faculty felt students understood the basis of grading, while only 71 percent of students agreed. It would appear that faculty are making clearer their objectives and grading procedures, or at least are under the impression that they are. Without current student data we cannot be sure.

Ninety (90) percent of the instructors in this sample agreed that grades reflected their students' achievement. In the 1974 study, 86 percent of faculty and 28 percent of students agreed with a comparable statement.

Items 4 through 13 on the survey questionnaire dealt with the use of different products and different standards of quality for various groups of students. In the 1974 survey, only three questions dealt with these issues. In that study, 63 percent of the faculty and 51 percent of the students agreed that it was all right for faculty to use different products for evaluating achievement of different students in the class. Only 8 percent of faculty in the current survey felt this way. In the 1974 study, 85 percent of the faculty and 59 percent of the students felt that the same standards of quality should be used for all students in the class. In the present study 96 percent of the faculty agreed that the same standard should be used. Apparently there has been a change in faculty attitudes over the past nine years. Measurement theory strongly suggests that for grades to be meaningful, the same products and standards of quality must be used for all students in the class. Many faculty appear to have adopted this principle.

Even though the instructors overwhelmingly agreed that the same products (91 percent) and the same standards (96 percent) *should* be used for all students in the class, when asked whether they sometimes used different products and/or standards for certain groups of students, their responses were less consistent. Regarding foreign students, those whose native language was not English, 8 percent of the faculty reported that they used different products, and 14 percent reported using more lenient standards of quality for these students. Only Humanities and Other (Educ., HPER, SPEA) faculty admitted to using different products for foreign students, but more lenient standards of quality for foreign students were reported as used sometimes in all areas except Business and Fine Arts.

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*Doerann-George, Judith et al. Grading: Student and Faculty Opinions, *Indiana Studies in Prediction*, No. 2. Bureau of Evaluative Studies and Testing, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405.

Table 8. Faculty Opinions on Student Evaluation Issues and Practices

ITEM (refer to Questionnaire in Appendix for full item statement)	Business N=7	Fine Arts N=5	Humanities N=17	Phys.Sci. N=11	Soc.Sci. N=8	Other N=7	Total N=55
1 Students understand objectives							
% Disagreement	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	14.3	2.0
% Agreement	100.0	100.0	87.6	90.9	100.0	85.7	97.2
Mean score (SD=1, SA=5)	4.2	4.6	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.3
2 Students understand grading procedures							
% Disagreement	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
% Agreement	100.0	100.0	93.8	91.0	100.0	85.7	96.1
Mean score	4.6	5.0	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.6	4.5
3 Satisfied that grades reflect achievement							
% Disagreement	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
% Agreement	100.0	100.0	100.0	81.9	75.0	85.8	90.4
Mean score	4.7	4.8	4.4	4.2	3.9	4.3	4.3
4 Same products should be used for all students							
% Disagreement	14.3	-0-	11.8	-0-	12.5	-0-	-0-
% Agreement	85.8	100.0	82.3	100.0	87.5	100.0	90.6
Mean score	4.1	5.0	3.9	4.8	4.3	4.7	4.4
5 Same standards should be used for all students							
% Disagreement	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
% Agreement	100.0	100.0	88.1	100.0	100.0	100.0	96.2
Mean score	4.9	4.8	4.3	4.5	4.6	4.9	4.7*
						*ANOVA sig. at .0285	
6 Sometimes have different products for foreign students							
% Disagreement	100.0	100.0	56.3	100.0	75.0	100.0	84.6
% Agreement	-0-	-0-	18.8	-0-	12.5	-0-	7.7
Mean score	1.3	1.2	2.3	1.3	2.3	1.4	1.7*
						*ANOVA is beyond .01	
7 Sometimes have more lenient standards for foreign students							
% Disagreement	100.0	100.0	75.0	90.9	85.7	85.7	86.3
% Agreement	-0-	-0-	25.0	9.1	14.3	14.3	13.7
Mean score	1.1	1.2	2.0	1.5	2.0	1.7	1.7
8 Sometimes have different products for minority students							
% Disagreement	100.0	100.0	88.2	100.0	87.5	100.0	94.4
% Agreement	-0-	-0-	5.9	-0-	12.5	-0-	3.8
Mean score	1.3	1.0	1.6	1.3	1.9	1.3	1.5
9 Sometimes have more lenient standards for minority students							
% Disagreement	85.7	100.0	94.1	100.0	87.5	85.7	92.4
% Agreement	-0-	-0-	5.9	-0-	12.5	14.3	5.7
Mean score	1.3	1.0	1.5	1.3	1.9	1.6	1.5
10 Sometimes have different products for disabled students							
% Disagreement	71.4	50.0	37.5	81.9	42.9	71.5	58.0
% Agreement	-0-	25.0	43.8	9.1	28.6	14.3	24.0
Mean score	1.7	2.3	2.9	1.9	2.9	2.0	2.4
11 Sometimes have more lenient standards for disabled students							
% Disagreement	100.0	75.0	81.3	100.0	57.2	100.0	87.7
% Agreement	-0-	-0-	6.3	-0-	-0-	-0-	2.0
Mean score	1.1	1.5	1.8	1.5	2.1	1.3	1.6
12 Departments should require equivalent products across sections							
% Disagreement	42.9	-0-	18.3	18.2	25.0	14.3	21.1
% Agreement	42.9	100.0	62.6	72.8	50.0	85.7	67.3
Mean score	3.0	4.8	3.6	3.9	3.1	4.0	3.7
13 Departments should require equivalent standards across sections							
% Disagreement	-0-	-0-	12.5	9.0	25.0	-0-	9.6
% Agreement	85.8	100.0	81.3	91.0	50.0	85.7	80.8
Mean score	4.3	5.0	4.0	4.2	3.3	4.4	4.1*
						*ANOVA sig. at .0349	
14 Extra credit projects are okay							
% Disagreement	85.7	75.0	41.2	63.7	62.5	71.5	61.6
% Agreement	14.3	25.0	29.4	18.2	-0-	14.3	19.2
Mean score	1.7	2.3	2.8	2.3	2.0	2.1	2.3
15 Most instructors can soon tell good from poor students							
% Disagreement	35.0	-0-	41.8	63.7	37.5	57.2	42.3
% Agreement	42.9	80.0	37.6	27.3	12.5	28.6	36.5
Mean score	2.9	3.8	3.0	2.5	2.8	2.7	2.9
16 Most instructors are too lenient							
% Disagreement	-0-	50.0	17.6	18.2	-0-	14.3	15.4
% Agreement	57.2	25.0	53.0	18.2	50.0	57.1	44.2
Mean score	3.7	2.8	3.5	3.1	3.5	3.3	3.4

% Disagreement = %SD + %D
% Agreement = %SA + %A

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Four (4) percent of the faculty said they sometimes required different products from minority students and 6 percent reported that they sometimes applied more lenient standards of quality for these students. The different products occurred in Humanities, Social Sciences and "Other" courses.

Many of the instructors in this survey noted that they had never had a physically disabled student in their classes, but none-the-less, 24 percent agreed that they sometimes used or would use different products for these students. Only 2 percent agreed that more lenient standards of quality are or should be used for the disabled (less than for either foreign or minority students). The different products occurred in all but Business, but only in Humanities did the possibility of more lenient standards of quality exist.

Faculty were also asked if they believed that it was acceptable for departments to require common products, and to apply common standards across sections of a course. These questions of departmental requirements for products and standards did not elicit comments from instructors about academic freedom, but 67 percent agreed that equivalent standards should be employed. Disagreement occurred primarily among Business and Social Science faculty regarding products, and among Social Science faculty regarding standards. The 1974 study included one question related to inter-section grading. Seventy (70) percent of the faculty and 84 percent of the students in that survey agreed with the statement: "Instructors in different sections of a course are likely to give different grades for the same level of student achievement." It appears that the present sample of faculty is more likely to support common standards than was true ten years ago.

Several other issues were dealt with in the present study. Only 19 percent of the faculty felt that it was all right to allow students to do extra credit projects to raise their grade. Fully 62 percent disagreed with this practice, while the remainder were undecided. One must wonder if the one-in-five instructors who admitted special projects also favored common products for all students' grades.

On another issue, the faculty were split as to whether they felt that most instructors could tell the good from the poor students early in the semester. Some 37 percent agreed they could, 42 percent disagreed, and 21 percent were undecided. Again one must wonder to what extent faculty expectations for student achievement colors grades.

In times of inflated grades, the question of leniency arises. Forty-four (44) percent felt that most instructors are too lenient in assigning grades, 41 percent were undecided, and only 15 percent disagreed. In 1974, 53 percent of faculty felt instructors were too lenient in assigning grades. No great change has occurred on this issue.

One item (item 19) on the questionnaire simply asked instructors to rate (on a five point scale) whether evaluation of students should be subjective or objective. On the whole, faculty tended to believe that student evaluation should be more objective than subjective. Mean ratings were calculated for each academic area and an analysis of variance was performed. The results of these calculations are presented in Table 4.

In the more "data oriented" subject areas, Physical Sciences and Business, faculty believe evaluation should be most objective, while those in Humanities and Fine Arts are less committed to objectivity in evaluation (though still tending toward objective rather than subjective evaluation of students). The statistical test of the data in Table 4 support the idea that objectivity of evaluation differs according to academic area.

Table 4. Mean responses by Academic Area to item 19: "Evaluation of students should be totally subjective ... totally objective."

Academic Area	Mean*	N
Physical Science	4.5	11
Business	4.4	7
Social Sciences	4.3	6
Other (Educ., HPER, SPEA)	4.1	7
Humanities	3.8	16
Fine Arts	3.6	5
Total	4.1	52

*Totally subjective1; Totally objective = 5; F = 2.85 signif<.05.

The final issue in this report dealt with the "ideal" grading method selected by faculty. Item 17 on the questionnaire listed four different grading methods commonly employed by college instructors. These were:

Criterion method—Assign point values to each product, then add up the points at the end and assign grades according to pre-determined standards of quality.
Curve method—Assign point values to each product, then add up the points at the end and assign grades according to how students rank in the class.
Average method—Give each product a letter grade, then average these grades at the end.
Adjustment method—Give points or grades for some products then use other, ungraded products (such as class participation) to adjust the final grade up or down.

A fifth option, "Other," was also provided and instructors selecting this option were asked to specify the method they considered best. Table 5 presents the percentages of each academic area selecting each of the methods a "best." A listing of the "other" methods is also provided in the Appendix.

Table 5. Faculty choice of "best" grading method. Percentages selecting each method.

Method	Business	FineArts	Human	PhysSci	SocSci	Other	Total
Criterion	57.1	40.0	29.4	36.4	25.0	0	30.9
Curve	42.9	20.0	5.9	45.5	25.0	14.3	23.6
Average	0	20.0	0	9.1	25.0	28.6	10.9
Adjustment	0	0	23.5	0	12.5	28.6	12.7
Other	0	20.0	41.2	9.1	12.5	28.6	21.8

The data in Table 5 indicate that, like objectivity in evaluation, faculty in different academic areas choose different methods of grading. In Business and Physical Science almost all instructors used either the criterion or the curve method. Physical Science instructors showed a slight preference for the curve method (46 percent) while Business people gave an edge to the criterion method (57 percent). On the other hand, the largest percentage (41 percent) of Humanities instructors had their own method, with the remainder being divided primarily among the criterion method (29 percent) and the adjustment method (24 percent). Forty (40) percent of the Fine Arts instructors selected the criterion method, while the remainder were split between the curve, average, and "their own" methods with 20 percent selecting each. The Social Science instructors were also fairly evenly divided as to their choice of best grading method, with 25 percent each selecting the criterion, curve and average methods, while 12.5 percent used the adjustment and "their own" methods. Of the "Other" instructors (Educ., HPER and SPEA), none chose the criterion method, while 29 percent chose each of the average, adjustment and "their own" systems. Another 14 percent chose the curve method. Clearly, faculty are not in agreement as to the best method by which to assign grades.

DISCUSSION

The focus of this study was on procedures used by faculty in the evaluation of students in various academic areas in Indiana University. The products used by instructors to evaluate the achievement of students in their classes varied across the several academic areas. Business faculty used primarily Essay Tests and Research Papers. Physical Science faculty used mostly Objective Tests, Homework Assignments, and Research Papers. In all of the other academic areas, a wide variety of products were considered when compiling grades. Fine Arts faculty employed the widest variety of student products. These differences among disciplines appear entirely appropriate in that course objectives vary widely and assessment tools must be consistent with objectives.

Faculty opinions about some grading practices appear to have changed substantially over the last nine years. Instructors now seem much more positive that their students understand the objectives of the course, and that the same products and standards should be used for all students in the class. They were also more positive, though less dramatically so, that students understand their grading system and that grades reflect achievement. One must wonder what students would say about these issues.

Though faculty now overwhelmingly agree that both products and standards should be the same for all students, some do admit to sometimes using different products or more lenient standards for foreign, minority, and disabled students. To what extent leniency is applied is unknown. In the minds of the faculty fairness appears to have many dimensions.

A large portion of faculty believes that student evaluation should be objective rather than subjective, with Business and Physical Science instructors feeling more strongly about this than Humanities and Fine Arts instructors. This may well be tied to a feeling that faculty must have clear-cut procedures for grading that can be described to students. This speculation is consistent with the faculty's preference for grading methods. The criterion method was the most popular with Business, Fine Arts and Humanities instructors, while the curve method was preferred by a large proportion of Business and Physical Science faculty. Both of these methods lean on objective data.

In classes where the adjustment method is used one must speculate on tthe number of variables that influence grades. Certainly compatibility of student and faculty personalities is relevant, as are the students' social skills, verbal fluency, physical attractiveness, and ability to sense the instructor's bias. How a faculty member assesses variables such as "participation" can be an item of considerable controversy in itself.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study suggest the following conclusions:

1. Instructors feel that they do an adequate job in communicating the course objectives and the grading method to the students.

2. Instructors on the whole feel that student evaluation should be objective rather than subjective, but this varies with discipline. Business and Physical Sciences are most convinced of this; Humanities and Fine Arts are least convinced.

3. Faculty believe that the same products and standards should be used for all students in the class and many feel that equivalent products and standards should be required across multi-section classes. However, some faculty will tamper with these requirements to accommodate minorities and foreign students.

4. Preferred methods of assessment vary with disciplines, the more data oriented disciplines are more likely to prefer objective procedures.

5. A significant group of faculty cling to use of such variables as "participation" and "attitude" as devices for manipulating grades, in spite of the fact that the assessment of these activities is purely subjective, typically unrecorded and usually not behaviors which are intended to be altered by instruction in the subject matter.

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APPENDIX

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION

To

Dept

Subj Survey of grading practices and opinions

From: Linda Morton Wakefield Telephone 5-4409

Dept. Bureau of Evaluative Studies and Testing

Date February 15, 1983

The enclosed survey concerns procedures used by faculty to evaluate student achievement. We are interested in learning what types of testing and grading practices are employed and/or endorsed by instructors at Indiana University. Your name was one of 90 selected at random from the faculty roster, thus your cooperation in completing this anonymous questionnaire will be most appreciated. It should take only about 10 minutes of your time.

Some of the items request responses related to both "standards of quality" and "educational products." While the meaning of the term "standards of quality" is probably apparent, the term "educational products" may need some explanation. These "products" are the tangible or intangible accomplishments of students which instructors use to evaluate their achievement in the class. Some examples of educational products might be: tests, term papers, attendance, recitation, etc.

For the first 16 items, please place a check mark in the column which corresponds to your degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement. SD if you Strongly Disagree with the statement; D if you Disagree, but not strongly; U if you are Undecided; A if you generally Agree; and SA if you Strongly Agree. For the remainder of the items, simply check the response which most closely reflects your opinion.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to BEST in the enclosed campus mail envelope. If you have any questions or problems, please feel free to call our office. We would hope to have all the questionnaires returned by March 11, 1983.

Thank you so much for your assistance.

LMW:hm
Encs.

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GRADING SURVEY

	SD 1	D 2	U 3	A 4	SA 5
1. Students in my classes understand the *objectives* of the course.	____	____	____	____	____
2. Students in my classes understand how their *grades* will be computed.	____	____	____	____	____
3. I am satisfied that students' grades in my classes reflect their achievement.	____	____	____	____	____
4. Every student in the class should be graded on the same set of *products* (e.g., 2 tests, 1 paper, not tests for some students and papers for others).	____	____	____	____	____
5. Every student in the class should be graded with the same *standards* of quality.	____	____	____	____	____
6. In my classes, different kinds of *products* are sometimes required for foreign students than for U.S. natives.	____	____	____	____	____
7. In my classes, more lenient *standards* of quality are sometimes used for foreign students.					
8. In my classes, different kinds of *products* are sometimes required of minority students.	____	____	____	____	____
9. In my classes, more lenient *standards* of quality are sometimes used for minority students.	____	____	____	____	____
10. In my classes, different kinds of *products* are sometimes required of physically disabled students.	____	____	____	____	____
11. In my classes, more lenient *standards* of quality are sometimes used for physically disabled students.	____	____	____	____	____
12. Departments should require that equivalent *products* be used across all sections of a particular course.	____	____	____	____	____
13. Departments should require that equivalent *standards* of quality be used across all sections of a particular course.	____	____	____	____	____
14. Students should be allowed to do extra credit projects to raise their grades.	____	____	____	____	____
15. Most instructors can tell the good students from the poor ones soon after the course begins.	____	____	____	____	____
16. Most instructors are too lenient in assigning grades.	____	____	____	____	____
17. The best method (check only one) for obtaining final course grades is to:	____	____	____	____	____

____ Assign point values to each product, then add up the points at the end and assign grades according to predetermined standards of quality (criterion method).
____ Assign point values to each product, then add up the points at the end and assign grades according to how students rank in the class ("curve" method).
____ Give each product a letter grade, then average these grades at the end.
____ Give points or grades for some products, then use other, ungraded products (such as class participation) to adjust the final grade up or down.
____ Other, please specify: _____

_____

18. To what extent should grades in courses such as yours be based on:	Not At All 1	2	Somewhat 3	4	Completely 5
a) objective tests	a) ____	____	____	____	____
b) essay tests	b) ____	____	____	____	____
c) research papers	c) ____	____	____	____	____
d) other papers or essays	d) ____	____	____	____	____
e) lab reports	e) ____	____	____	____	____
f) lab performance	f) ____	____	____	____	____
g) artistic performance	g) ____	____	____	____	____
h) oral reports	h) ____	____	____	____	____
i) in-class participation	i) ____	____	____	____	____
j) homework assignments	j) ____	____	____	____	____
k) student's attitude	k) ____	____	____	____	____
l) computer printouts	l) ____	____	____	____	____
m) improvement over the semester	m) ____	____	____	____	____
n) attendance	n) ____	____	____	____	____
o) effort	o) ____	____	____	____	
p) other, please specify: _____	p) ____	____	____	____	____

19. Evaluation of students should be: totally subjective ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ totally objective.
1 2 3 4 5

THIS COMPLETES THE OPINION SURVEY AS SUCH, BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A LITTLE INFORMATION ABOUT YOU ...

20. Do you teach mostly ____ undergraduate courses? ____ graduate courses?
21. What is your sex? ____ male ____ female
22. How many years have you been teaching college level courses? ____ less than 2 yrs ____ 2-5 yrs ____ over 5 yrs
23. Do you currently teach ____ full time? ____ half time or less? ____ other
24. Do you teach more than one section of the same course? ____ yes ____ no
25. Do you have AIs who teach other sections of your course? ____ yes ____ no
26. Is there any coordination between you and your AIs on ____ products ____ standards of quality ____ no coordination
27. In which area is your primary teaching responsibility?

____ Business
____ Education
____ Fine or Performing Arts (Art, Music, Drama)
____ HPER
____ Humanities (Lang, Eng, Hist, Phil, Journ, Inst. AfroAmer, Folklore, Speech)
____ Law
____ Medical Science
____ Nursing
____ Optometry
____ Physical Sciences (Astro, Bio, chem, Comp, Geog, Geol, Math, Physics)
____ Social Sciences (Anthro, Soc, Psych, Econ, Pol Sci, Forensics, Home Econ)
____ SPEA
____ Other, please specify: _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION. PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED SURVEY IN THE ENCLOSED CAMPUS MAIL ENVELOPE.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

BUREAU OF EVALUATIVE STUDIES AND TESTING

Best Methods for Grading Listed by Faculty under "other"

HUMANITIES INSTRUCTORS

1. Use Criterion, but in borderline cases may consider progress, participation and intellectual engagement.
2. Use Average, but also count attendance and participation.
3. "I doubt if there is any one best method applicable to all classes. I find that a combination of (Criterion) and (Average) works best. I oppose the Curve method on principle."
4. A mixture of all four.
5. Trial by ordeal.
6. Assign point values to products/components, add and allow adjustment when needed (up ONLY with top grade100%), never adjust down but UP when trend merits, etc.
7. Depends upon the subject.

HPER INSTRUCTORS

8. "Weight each product, transform weights to standard scores, sum weighted standard scores, assign (grades) relative to past as well as present student achievement. Utilize micro or mini computers to give summative and formative evaluations."
9. Grading procedures vary with the type of course-combinations of above.

PHYS. SCI. INSTRUCTOR

10. Depends entirely on course, frequency of updating, and goals.

SOC. SCI. INSTRUCTOR

11. I have my own system.

FINE ARTS INSTRUCTOR

12. Criterion for some grad classes, Adjustment for undergrad and some grad classes.